

EXPLORE!

Tour Notes



Kingdom of the Ashanti (GN 2015)



TOUR DURATION
16
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Busy

Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard

tour Code: GN

Tour Highlights - Kingdom of the Ashanti

- ✓ Kakum N.P. - A walk in the lush rainforest and the chance to join an optional exhilarating canopy tour.
- ✓ Bolgatanga and the Far North - Lobi Villages, distinctive local architecture and painted houses in the Wa region.
- ✓ Mole - A walking safari in the park to look for elephants.
- ✓ Kumasi - The vibrant colours of the largest market in West Africa.
- ✓ Gold Coast Castles - The impressive 18th Century castle of Elmina, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Tour Essentials

Accommodation: 15 nights Standard Hotel

Included Meals: 15 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join tour: Accra

End Point: Tour ends: Accra

Transport: Bus, Boat

Countries: Ghana

Kingdom Of The Ashanti

From its lush rainforests to its golden sandy beaches, Ghana is a land of immense natural beauty. On this journey through one of Africa's friendliest nations we experience its diverse and rich culture, visiting vibrant markets, traditional Lobi villages and the striking mud-stick mosques. We also observe monkeys, track wild elephants and visit the impressive Gold Coast castles.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

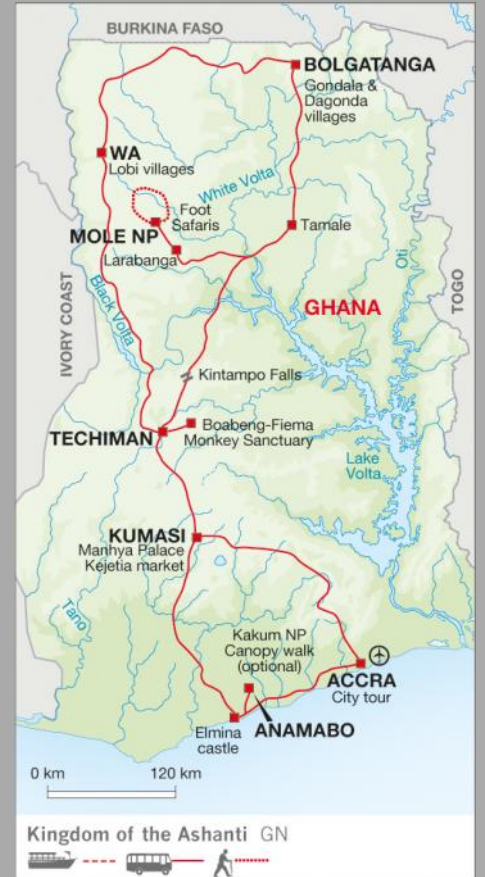
Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Busy

There may be early starts, long journeys and tiring days along the way, but you'll return home feeling you've really experienced as much as you possibly could.



Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

DAY 1 Join tour Accra

Join your tour in Accra today. Depending on the schedule of your flights, you may be able to explore the city independently before meeting the rest of the group, who will arrive from London on day 2 in the early morning.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 AM at rest, sightseeing in Accra

This morning we will have some free time to recover from the flight. In the afternoon we will head into Accra for some sightseeing. Although records of Accra date back to the 15th century, the capital of Ghana is a modern city with independence monuments and countless back streets. We'll take a tour later today to see the Kwame Nkrumah Circle and Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum. We'll drive through James Town, an area of colonial architecture topped by a 30m lighthouse, and pause at Fort Ussher where Kwame Nkrumah was imprisoned. Independence Square is a pseudo-Soviet worth seeing. There may be time this afternoon to visit the National Museum and the National Craft Centre.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Drive to Kumasi; sightseeing in the city

This morning we will drive to Kumasi, and in the afternoon we will have time to explore the city. We first head to Besease, a traditional Ashanti shrine. Still in active use, it is believed to date back at least 300 years although the current structure is thought to date back to around 1850. Most famously Yaa Asantewaa consulted the spirits here before leading the attack on the British fort in Kumasi. Later we arrive in Kumasi itself. Founded in 1695, Kumasi is the capital of the Ashanti Kingdom. In the 18th century it was the terminus for the slave trading routes but in the 19th century hostilities between the British colonists and Ashanti culminated in the city being burnt. Now it is Ghana's second largest city. This afternoon we should have time to visit Manhyia Palace and the Jubilee Museum. Here we see replicas of the Golden Stool, a sacred object to the Ashanti, for the original stool contains the sumsum, or spirit of the entire Ashanti kingdom. Stools are an important part of Ghana's culture and are considered as an extension of an individual both in life and in death.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 To Techiman

This morning is free to explore more of Kumasi including the National Cultural Centre, or perhaps head to Kejetia, the largest open air market in West Africa. Here some 10,000 traders haggle and barter amongst the hectic array of exotic herbs and spices, colourful pots and utensils and unusual foods, such as giant snails (sold either alive or roasted!). Later today we head north to our overnight stop at Techiman.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 To Mole National Park via Boabeng-Fiema

Our drive today takes us first to Boabeng-Fiema village and monkey sanctuary, home to several families of Colobus and Mona monkeys, considered sacred in Ghana. Close by are the 25m high Kintampo Falls, an area also home to a variety of birds, butterflies, indigenous flowers and trees. Before finally reaching Mole National Park we will also stop to visit the Larabanga mosque which is reputedly the oldest building in Ghana, but no-one can quite agree on its age! Some sources date it to the 13th century, which is highly improbable since Islam had barely reached the region at that time. The origins of the mosque relate to a traveller who found a mystic stone, threw his spear and then slept on it. He dreamt about a mosque and when he awoke, the foundations had mysteriously been laid around him. Whatever its origins, it is a striking mud/stick building, with minarets and painted walls. We finally enter Mole National Park, the largest park in Ghana. Established in 1958, Mole National Park is mostly flat savannah broken by a high escarpment. Its 4840 square km are home to over 90 species of mammals and 300 species of birds.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 6 Foot safaris in Mole National Park

A highlight of our trip - we make foot safaris with National Park rangers in both the morning and afternoon in search of some of the wildlife which lives here. Species commonly seen include elephant, several kinds of antelope, and monkey (including the Green Vervet and Red Patas monkeys). Up to 150 migratory bird species may also be seen in the Park, depending on the time of our visit.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 7 Exploring the Bolgatanga region

Heading north via Gondja and Dagomba villages we reach Ghana's far north, close to the border with Burkina Faso. Close by our route is Togo, its nearby hills venerated for their many sacred ancestral shrines, and we should have time to visit a local oracle.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Exploring the Bolgatanga region

We spend a full day in the Bolgatanga region, visiting the town's vibrant market, nearby Gurunsi communities with their unique architecture.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 Exploring Wa region

Our exploration continues as we turn west toward Wa, capital of the Upper West region. Our journey takes us through the rustic town of Navrongo. In an otherwise mostly Muslim area, Navrongo's predominantly Christian feel reflects its claim as the home of Catholicism in northern Ghana. We will visit the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, a traditionally constructed building notable for its frescos and Gurunsi paintings. We will also pass through Dagarti villages on our route.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 10 Exploring Wa region

We spend much of today exploring Lobi villages. The Lobi comprise a number of ethnic groups in both Ghana and Burkina Faso whose name translates as Children of the Forest. Naturally shy and mistrustful, for years the Lobi had to endure constant attacks from the Guiriko and Kenedougou, as well as the less than sympathetic attentions of the French. Fiercely independent, they still adhere to many of their traditional customs and animist practices, worshipping distinctive wooden fetishes and continuing to uphold their age-old beliefs in the spirit world. Residing in fortified mudbrick compounds in family groups, much like their Dagarti neighbours, the men still carry bows as their ancestors have for generations: the Lobi still have a fearsome reputation as hunters and warriors.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 11 To Techiman

Our drive today takes us south through remote areas of Ghana's far west through the small settlements of Mawule, Banda Nkwanta, and then to Bole where we will pause to see the beautiful mud and stick mosque.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 To Lake Bosomtwi; boat trip

Continuing south back through Kumasi, we reach the crater Lake Bosomtwi. Ghana's largest natural fresh-water body was created as a result of a meteorite impact. The lake is held sacred by Ashanti traditionalists and the Bosomtwi people. There is a taboo on the use of traditional pirogues (small flat-bottomed fishing boats) which local fishermen get round by lying on planks known as padua and using their hands as paddles. Surrounded by ragged mountains and thickly vegetated crater walls reaching a height of more than 600m, the lake is a stunning spectacle and we will spend this afternoon on a boat trip exploring its hidden corners.

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Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 13 Visit Elmina Castle

Continuing south we finally arrive back on the Atlantic coast at Elmina. The castles here were built along the entire Ghana coast by the colonial powers of the 15th century to protect merchants and their vested interests, and to create safe anchorages for their ships from the ferocity of the Atlantic Ocean. The castles were also used for 'storing' slaves before they were shipped abroad and so in effect were dungeons as well. Built on the profits of the then lucrative gold and slave trade, the castles became important symbols of European power in the region. With the eventual abolition of the slave trade emphasis changed to the more accepted forms of commerce - coffee, wood and spices. Here we'll visit Elmina Castle.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 14 Exploring Kakum National Park

Leaving the coast we head inland today to visit Kakum National Park. Here the rainforest is one of the most extensive in Ghana, and for those with a good head for heights, there is a canopy walkway some 40m high (optional). This walkway is unique in Africa and offers a rare opportunity to see the forest at the canopy level. Later this afternoon there is an optional tour of Cape Coast castle to learn more about the history of the area.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 15 Free time in Anomabu; drive to Accra

This morning we have free time on the beach in Anomabu, a last chance for a swim and to enjoy the ocean. We make our way to Accra at lunch time and have a last chance to visit the artisan market.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 16 Tour ends

Our tour ends today in Accra.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

Ghana's infrastructure for tourism is still very much developing. You must come prepared for some basic accommodation.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 15 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Ghana

Lunch £: 6.00

Dinner £: 10.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Ghana

Bottle of Beer £: 2.50

Water £: 1.00

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Kakum National Park - Treetop canopy walkway US\$ 12.

Mole NP - Visit to Larabanga mosque US\$ 2. Game Drive US\$ 16 (dependent on numbers)

Cape Coast castle - Guided tour US\$ 12.

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 25 for tipping local staff.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Foreign Exchange

Ghana

ATM Availability: Cash can be drawn at ATMs in major towns but these should not be relied upon.

Credit Card Acceptance: In major restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Dollar or Sterling Travellers Cheques (Thomas Cook or American Express) can be exchanged in major towns but this can be time consuming and should not be relied upon. Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currencyexpress.com/explore/>

Local Currency: Cedi.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: You should take the majority of your spending money in U.S Dollars, or Sterling, mixed denomination bills in good condition. Higher rates of exchange are available for larger US\$ bills.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Visa Information

Ghana: Visas are required by UK, US, Canadian, New Zealand and Australian citizens and should be obtained before departure.

Visas can be obtained through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK; Visaswift, at <http://www.visaswift.com/explore.aspx>. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Ghana

A valid Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is required for entry into Ghana. We recommend protection against malaria, hepatitis A, diphtheria, tetanus, typhoid and polio. Although the risk is low you may also consider immunisation against rabies and meningococcal meningitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against Malaria. We also recommend that you take your vaccination certificates with you as they may be requested on entry to Ghana. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Ghana

Ghana has a mostly tropical climate with more rain falling inland. Central and Southern Ghana have two rainy seasons from May-June and mid-Sept to early October. Rain usually falls in short bursts in the afternoon or early evening. Travel is generally unaffected by the rains except on some of the less wellmaintained roads. Temperatures are usually in the high 20's °C all year round, but can reach the mid 30s from December through to April. Humidity is high. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Clothing

Temperatures are warm and humidity is high year round, but warm clothing may be needed for early morning starts. Lightweight waterproofs are recommended. Brightly coloured clothing should be avoided for game walks. Bring swimwear and a sunhat (or buy one locally). Women may feel more comfortable with their legs covered in the northern Muslim region.

Please note: wearing military apparel such as camouflage clothing by civilians is prohibited.

Equipment

Water bottle, towel, insect repellent, and a torch (head torch) are essential. Binoculars are useful for bird watching.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes and sandals for relaxing/travelling.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Ghana

Population: 24,233,431

Size of Country: 238,535 sq km

Major Language: English

Religion: Christian

Electric Supply & Plugs

Ghana

3 Pin Flat

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditions, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants,

allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- [The Travel Foundation](#)

Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk

- [Tourism Concern](#)

Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk

- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety>

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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